

NICOLE

Hey.

INT. CHARLIE'S RENTAL APARTMENT. DAY

Charlie, somewhat formally, ushers her in.

CHARLIE

Where's Henry?

NICOLE

He's with Cassie and her
kids at Laser Tag.

CHARLIE

You want something to drink?

CHARLIE

I have unfiltered tap water, beer
and some juice boxes.

NICOLE

I'll have a juice box.

He goes into the kitchen. She looks at his rental place.
It makes her sad.

NICOLE

You don't have anything on the
walls.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

I don't have anything to put on
them except Henry's art which is
being framed.

NICOLE

I can give you some things, you
know until you get some stuff...
How about that great picture of
Henry on the Staten Island Ferry--

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Aren't you in that one?

NICOLE

Oh, right, I guess I am.
(shrugs)
I guess you can cut me out?

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Oh, I'm going to have to
leave a day early to go to
New York on the 22nd so I
was wondering if I could
take Henry that Friday--

NICOLE

The 22nd? So, that's the 21st?
We have plans actually. We're
going to this thing at LACMA with
the cousins--

He reappears and hands her a juice box.

CHARLIE	NICOLE
But could you change it so I	It's only that night. He's
can take him--	looking forward to it.

CHARLIE

Really?

NICOLE

It's my night, Charlie, we negotiated it.

CHARLIE	NICOLE
(coldly)	I mean...what?
OK. Fine.	

CHARLIE

No, I'm just asking you to be flexible--

NICOLE

I AM flexible. You come in and out and I adjust based on your schedule. This one night we happen to have to have tickets to a thing. I mean...

CHARLIE

It's not only this one night, but fine...

She opens the straw, and uses it to puncture the hole and sips the drink.

NICOLE

Henry's teacher wants to meet with us.

CHARLIE

You mean his LA teacher--

NICOLE	CHARLIE
Can you respond to the email	Yeah, I've been distracted.
so we can set a time?	

NICOLE

I understand. They just want to rule out everything, you know, with his reading.

CHARLIE

I think he's just over-anxious. I think he wants it so much.

NICOLE
I know, he quits too easily
if things aren't easy for
him. You know, he's like
us, he's stubborn.

CHARLIE
They said he's off the
charts in math.

NICOLE
He's still a lousy Monopoly player
because he tries to save all his
money.

Charlie laughs. Nicole smiles.

NICOLE
So... I thought we should talk.

CHARLIE
Uh huh.

NICOLE
I feel like maybe things
have gone too far.

CHARLIE
Uh huh.

NICOLE
I mean, my mom has taken out a
loan against the house to help me
pay Nora-

CHARLIE
I thought I pay Nora.

NICOLE
You pay thirty percent of Nora.

CHARLIE
Well, I'm going broke too if
that's any help. I've just agreed
to direct two shitty plays and we
can forget putting anything away
for Henry's college.

NICOLE
(trying not to take the
bait)
It's just that...up until now
we've been able to keep Henry at
least somewhat removed. And this
will change that.

CHARLIE
Uh huh.

NICOLE
And we have to protect him.

CHARLIE
I agree.

NICOLE

Nora says the evaluator will come into our homes. She'll interview Henry in addition to us, our family, friends, enemies... And then she'll observe us with him, how we are as parents.

CHARLIE

Sounds awful.

NICOLE

I know! I feel like if anyone observed me on any given day as a mom, I'd never get custody.

(pause)

That was a joke.

CHARLIE

I know. I feel the same way.

NICOLE

(smiles)

Right. So, maybe we can figure something out between us--

CHARLIE

You'll remember I said this to you at the beginning.

NICOLE

I know you did, but these are different circumstances--

CHARLIE

I was anticipating these circumstances--

NICOLE

Mm hm. Anyway... Shall we try this?

CHARLIE

(pause)

OK.

There's a long silence. They both laugh.

CHARLIE

I don't know how to start...

NICOLE

Do you understand why I want to stay in LA?

CHARLIE

No.

NICOLE

Well, that's not...Charlie, that's not a useful way for us to start--

CHARLIE

I don't understand it.

NICOLE

You don't remember promising that we could do time out here?

CHARLIE

We discussed things. We were married, we said things. We talked about moving to Europe, about getting a sideboard or what do you call it, a credenza, to fill that empty space behind the couch. We never did any of it.

NICOLE

And you turned down that residency at the Geffen that would have brought us here and--

CHARLIE

It wasn't something I wanted. We had a great theater company and a great life where we were.

NICOLE

You call that a great life.

CHARLIE

You know what I mean.

NICOLE

Me discovering you're fucking Mary Ann--

CHARLIE

Don't pretend you're not capable of deception. You left Ben for ME.

CHARLIE

I don't mean we had a great marriage. I mean, life in Brooklyn... Professionally. I don't know. Honestly I never considered anything different.

NICOLE

Well, that's the problem isn't it? I was your wife, you should have considered my happiness too.

CHARLIE

Come on! You WERE happy. You've just decided you weren't now--

NICOLE
 (not taking the bait)
 So, OK, let's... I work here now.
 My family is here.

CHARLIE
 And I agreed to put Henry in
 school here because your show went
 to series. I did that KNOWING
 that when you were done shooting,
 he would come back to New York...

NICOLE
 Honey, we never said that. That
 might have been your assumption,
 but we never expressly said
 that...

CHARLIE
 We did say it.

NICOLE
 When did we say it?

CHARLIE
 I don't know when we said it, but
 we said it!

NICOLE
 I thought--

CHARLIE
 (remembering something)
 We said it that time on the
 phone--

NICOLE
 Let me finish. Honey--
 (hesitates, angry at
 herself)
 Sorry, I keep saying THAT.
 (resumes)
 I thought...that if Henry was
 happy out here and my show
 continued, that we might do LA for
 a while.

CHARLIE
 I was not privy to that thought
 process.

NICOLE
 The only reason we didn't live
 here was because you can't imagine
 desires other than your own unless
 they're forced on you.

CHARLIE

OK, you wish you hadn't married me, you wish you'd had a different life. But this is what happened.

NICOLE

(trying to stay calm)
So what do we do?

CHARLIE

I don't know.

NICOLE

Nora says there's no coming back from this.

CHARLIE

Fuck Nora. I hate fucking Nora telling me I always lived in LA even though I never lived in LA. How could you have her say those things about me?

NICOLE

Jay said them about me too!
(hesitates)
You shouldn't have fired Bert.

CHARLIE

I needed my own asshole!

NICOLE

Let's both agree both of our lawyers have said shitty stuff about both of us--

CHARLIE

Nora was worse.

NICOLE

Jay called me an alcoholic!

CHARLIE

You pulled the rug out from under me and you're putting me through hell--

NICOLE

You put me through hell
DURING the marriage!

CHARLIE

Is that what that was?
Hell?

NICOLE

And now you're going to put Henry through this horrible thing so you can yet again get what you want.

CHARLIE

It's not what I want...I mean,
it's what I want, but it's what
was...WAS...what's best for him.

NICOLE

I was wondering when you'd get
around to Henry and what HE
actually wants.

CHARLIE

Oh, fuck off--

NICOLE

No, YOU fuck off. If you listened
to your son, or anyone, he'd tell
you he'd rather live here.

CHARLIE

Stop putting your feelings
about me onto Henry.

NICOLE

He tells me he likes it here
better.

CHARLIE

He tells you because he knows it's
what you want to HEAR!

NICOLE

He tells me you're on the phone
all the time. You don't even play
with him.

CHARLIE

Because I'm going through a
divorce in LA and trying to
direct a play in New York.

NICOLE

You're fighting for
something you don't even
WANT.

CHARLIE

Which closed because I wasn't
THERE! That was a HUGE
opportunity for me. For the
theater. And I let everyone down.

NICOLE

You're being so much like your
father.

CHARLIE

DO NOT compare me to my father.

NICOLE

I didn't compare you. I said you
were acting like him.

CHARLIE

You're exactly like your mother!
Everything you complain about her,
you're doing. You're suffocating
Henry.

NICOLE

First of all, I love my
mother, she was a great
mother!

CHARLIE

I'm just repeating what
you've told me--

NICOLE

Secondly, how dare you compare my
mothering to my mother? I might
be like my father, but I'm NOT
like my mother.

CHARLIE

You ARE! And you're like my
father. You're also like MY
mother. You're all the bad things
about all of these people. But
mostly your mother. When we would
lie in bed together, sometimes I
would look at you and see HER and
just feel so GROSS.

NICOLE

I felt repulsed when you touched
me.

CHARLIE

You're a slob. I made all
the beds, closed all the
cabinets, picked up after
you like an infant--

NICOLE

The thought of having sex
with you makes me want to
peel my skin off.

CHARLIE

You'll never be happy. In LA or
anywhere. You'll think you found
some better, opposite guy than me
and in a few years you'll rebel
against him because you need to
have your VOICE. But you don't
WANT a voice. You just want to
fucking complain about not having
a VOICE.

NICOLE

I think of being married to you
and that woman is a stranger to
me.

CHARLIE
You've regressed. You've
gone back to your life
before you met me. It's
pathetic.

NICOLE
We had a child's marriage.

NICOLE
People used to say to me that you
were too selfish to be a great
artist. I used to defend you.
But they're absolutely right.

CHARLIE
All your best acting is
behind you. You're back to
being a HACK.

NICOLE
You gaslighted me. You're a
fucking villain.

CHARLIE
You want to present yourself as a
victim because it's a good legal
strategy, FINE. But you and I
both know you CHOSE this life.
You wanted it until you didn't.

Nicole is silent.

CHARLIE
You USED me so you could get out
of LA.

NICOLE
I didn't use you--

CHARLIE
You did and then you BLAMED
me for it. You always made
me aware of what I was doing
wrong, how I was falling
short.

CHARLIE
Life with you was JOYLESS.

NICOLE
So you had to fuck someone else?
How could you?

CHARLIE
You shouldn't be upset that I
fucked her, you should be upset
that I had a laugh with her.

NICOLE
Do you love her?

CHARLIE

No! But she didn't hate me. You hated me.

NICOLE

You hated ME. You fucked someone we worked with.

CHARLIE

You stopped having sex with me in the last year. I never cheated on you.

NICOLE

That was cheating on me.

CHARLIE

But there's so much I could have done. I was a director in my 20's who came from nothing and was suddenly on the cover of fucking Time Out New York. I was hot shit--and I wanted to fuck EVERYBODY and I didn't. And I loved you and didn't want to lose you...and I'm in my twenties and I didn't want to lose that too. And you wanted SO much so fast...I didn't even want to get married...and fuck it, there's so much I DIDN'T do.

NICOLE

Well, thanks for that.

CHARLIE

You're welcome. You're...welcome.

Nicole stamps her feet and shakes her fists like a child having a tantrum.

NICOLE

I can't believe I have to know you FOREVER!

CHARLIE

You're fucking insane!

Charlie raises his arm and punches the wall. The cheap dry-wall cracks and chips.

CHARLIE

And you're fucking winning.

NICOLE
Are you kidding? I wanted to be
married. I'd ALREADY LOST.
(sadly)
You didn't love me as much as I
loved you.

CHARLIE
(pause)
What does that have to do with LA?

Nicole stares at him, incredulous.

CHARLIE	NICOLE
What?	You're so merged with your own selfishness that you don't even identify it as selfishness anymore. YOU'RE SUCH A DICK.

CHARLIE
Every day I wake up and hope
you're dead-- Dead like--

And then Charlie starts crying.

CHARLIE
(through tears)
If I could guarantee Henry would
be OK, I'd hope you get an illness
and then get hit by a car and DIE.

He sinks down, weeping. All this vitriol has taken its
toll. Nicole watches, taken aback. She walks over and
gently puts her hand on his shoulder. He shakes and cries.

NICOLE
I know.

Finally, he looks up at her.

CHARLIE
I'm sorry.

NICOLE
Me too.

SET DESIGNER (V.O.)
Try the chair by the window...